

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

December 12, 2013

1237

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We write you regarding the importance of ongoing universal service reforms to making broadband communications services available to all New Mexicans.

Restoring American leadership in broadband could create opportunities economic growth, distance learning, and telemedicine that directly benefit those living in rural areas in New Mexico and across the nation. Yet according to the Commission's 2012 Broadband Progress Report, nearly half the New Mexicans living in rural areas lack fixed broadband access.

According to the US Census Bureau, about one third of New Mexican households do not have Internet access at home. This digital divide challenge highlights the importance of ongoing efforts to modernize the universal service fund (USF).

In an October 2011 letter on proposed USF reforms, the New Mexico Congressional delegation wrote that our state's "broadband providers need to be able to make and sustain investments in our rural communities." In July 2012, the New Mexico Congressional delegation further asked the Commission to ensure that its quantile regression analysis (QRA) system did not hinder the ability of New Mexico's rural telecommunications providers to provide broadband in unserved and underserved areas.

Due to the QRA system, rural telecommunications companies in New Mexico face USF-related uncertainties that are negatively impacting broadband investments. We have heard reports that almost 70% of small rural carriers in New Mexico have curtailed or cancelled planned infrastructure projects. Such actions could place many New Mexicans even further across the digital divide affecting our state.

We therefore are encouraged by your announcement today that you will seek to eliminate the QRA. We ask you to consider options that will advance universal service reform while also helping New Mexico's rural telecommunications companies better calculate future levels of broadband support. Such certainty could help remove barriers to making and sustaining broadband investments in rural areas.

Thank you for your consideration within your rules and regulations. We look forward to working closely with you to bring greater broadband access to rural communities in New Mexico and across America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Udall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" being more prominent than the last name "Udall".

Tom Udall
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin Heinrich". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name "Martin" being more prominent than the last name "Heinrich".

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stevan Pearce". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name "Stevan" being more prominent than the last name "Pearce".

Stevan Pearce
United States Representative

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ben Ray Lujan". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name "Ben" being more prominent than the last name "Lujan".

Ben Ray Luján
United States Representative

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michelle Lujan Grisham". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with the first name "Michelle" being more prominent than the last name "Grisham".

Michelle Lujan Grisham
United States Representative



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 24, 2014

The Honorable Tom Udall
United States Senate
110 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Udall:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the Commission's Quantile Regression Analysis (QRA) on rural carriers in New Mexico. I appreciate your views and will ensure that your letter will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

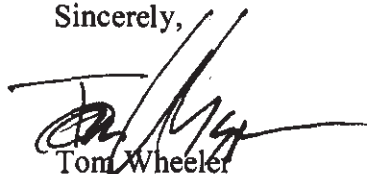
As I have made clear since the day I arrived at the Commission, one of the core elements of communications policy that must guide the work of the FCC is the critical need for all Americans to have access to high-speed broadband networks. Access denied is opportunity denied. To that end, I am a firm believer in the importance of universal service, and I agree that the Commission must make timely decisions in order to provide regulatory certainty and create incentives to further efficient investment in broadband networks. We must also be open to modifications to the reforms if it is clear that particular rules are not serving their intended purpose.

To that point, as I stated during the recent House Communications and Technology Subcommittee hearing on FCC Oversight, I have directed the Wireline Competition Bureau to prepare an order for the Commission's consideration that would eliminate the QRA.

I look forward to continuing the work of reforming and modernizing the universal service fund high-cost program – as well as other components of the Fund – and to working with stakeholders, including rural carriers and consumers, to ensure that all Americans have access to robust voice and broadband services.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 24, 2014

The Honorable Martin Heinrich
United States Senate
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Heinrich:

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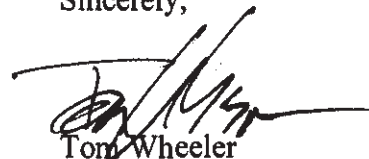
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 24, 2014

The Honorable Michelle Lujan Grisham
U.S. House of Representatives
214 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman Lujan Grisham:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the Commission's Quantile Regression Analysis (QRA) on rural carriers in New Mexico. I appreciate your views and will ensure that your letter will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

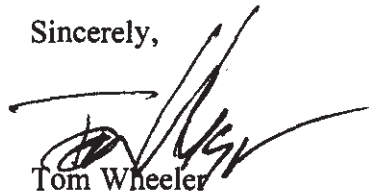
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 24, 2014

The Honorable Ben Luján
U.S. House of Representatives
2446 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Luján:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the Commission's Quantile Regression Analysis (QRA) on rural carriers in New Mexico. I appreciate your views and will ensure that your letter will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

As I have made clear since the day I arrived at the Commission, one of the core elements of communications policy that must guide the work of the FCC is the critical need for all Americans to have access to high-speed broadband networks. Access denied is opportunity denied. To that end, I am a firm believer in the importance of universal service, and I agree that the Commission must make timely decisions in order to provide regulatory certainty and create incentives to further efficient investment in broadband networks. We must also be open to modifications to the reforms if it is clear that particular rules are not serving their intended purpose.

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

January 24, 2014

The Honorable Steve Pearce
U.S. House of Representatives
2432 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Pearce:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the Commission's Quantile Regression Analysis (QRA) on rural carriers in New Mexico. I appreciate your views and will ensure that your letter will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

As I have made clear since the day I arrived at the Commission, one of the core elements of communications policy that must guide the work of the FCC is the critical need for all Americans to have access to high-speed broadband networks. Access denied is opportunity denied. To that end, I am a firm believer in the importance of universal service, and I agree that the Commission must make timely decisions in order to provide regulatory certainty and create incentives to further efficient investment in broadband networks. We must also be open to modifications to the reforms if it is clear that particular rules are not serving their intended purpose.

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